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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BRASILIA 000623

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SUBJECT: BRAZIL: CJCS MEETING WITH INSTITUTIONAL SECURITY
MINISTER FELIX, 10 MARCH 2004

Classified By: DENNIS HEARNE, POLITICAL COUNSELOR. REASONS: 1.5
(B)(D)

1. (C) SUMMARY. Brazil's senior security and intelligence official, Institutional Security Minister Jorge Felix, told visiting CJCS Myers on 10 March in Brasilia that narcotrafficking poses a grave threat to Brazilian national security. The threat is manifest in international arms-for-drugs trafficking involving Brazilian organized crime gangs, in the spread of corruption in Brazilian institutions, and in widespread violence against the public. Felix expressed concern that narcotraffickers might place innocent civilians on their aircraft, for use as human shields against lethal force interdictions, and said such issues made the decision to implement the shutdown law a difficult one that the President must make. Nonetheless, he reiterated the position that the GOB considers narcotrafficking to be a threat to national security. On terrorism, Felix said Brazilian authorities have found "no evidence" of operational terrorist activities in Brazil, but said that the potential "bears watching." End summary.

2. (U) CJCS General Richard Myers, accompanied by Charge, ORA Chief, DATT and JCS staff met with Minister Felix and senior officials of the Institutional Security Cabinet (Portuguese acronym GSI) at the Planalto Palace (Presidential offices) on 10 March 2004. The GSI is an interagency organization within the Presidency that functions, in roughly equivalent USG terms, as a combination NSC, ONDCP, DCI and general crisis management center. A cabinet-level officer and general in the Brazilian army, Felix is in charge of the GSI and serves as the President's senior security and intelligence advisor.

SHOOTDOWN

3. (S) General Myers asked Minister Felix whether narcotrafficking represents a grave threat to Brazil's national security. Felix responded that narcotrafficking does pose a major threat to Brazilian national security on both a "wholesale" and "retail" level. Elaborating, Felix said that the "wholesale" threat is seen in the growth of international drugs for weapons trafficking between Brazilian criminal organizations and Colombian groups, and also in the spread of narcotics-related corruption through Brazilian institutions. On the "retail" level, the dramatic level of hard drug use within Brazil is harming the population, in terms of health and exposure to increased criminal violence.

4. (S) General Myers then asked Felix whether he was comfortable that implementing a shutdown law in Brazil would be a positive development. Felix replied that he has some concerns that narcotraffickers "will not play by the same rules as we do," and may react to shutdown measures by placing innocent women and children on narcotrafficking aircraft, for use as human shields against the use of lethal force in interdiction operations. Such concerns make the GOB's decision to implement a difficult one that, Felix said, will have to be made by President Lula da Silva. However, Felix reiterated the position that narcotrafficking constitutes a grave threat to Brazilian national and public security.

TERRORISM

5. (C) Turning to the issue of terrorism, Felix said that in the years before the September 11 attacks the GOB had routinely declared that Brazil was free of terrorist activities. Now, he said the GOB's position is that it has so far "found no evidence" of operational terrorist activities in Brazil. He clearly stressed the concept of "evidence" -- as opposed to saying no such activity exists -- asking his interpreter to repeat this phrase with emphasis to the USG interlocutors. The potential for increased terrorist activity in Brazil "bears watching," Felix added.

6. (S) Felix affirmed that operational cooperation between GOB and USG intelligence and security agencies is excellent. The tri-border area of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay is a "complex area" where various types of money laundering, counterfeiting and other clandestine activities overlap one another, Felix said. There is clearly potential for Islamic terrorist fund-raising within this shadowy mix, Felix said, but the GOB also must be careful to not tarnish unfairly the image of the more than eight million law-abiding Brazilians of Arab descent.

17. (U) General Myers did not have the opportunity to clear this message.

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